



Forum for American Leadership

FAL Europe Working Group Brief How the U.S. and Europe Should Respond to the Russian War against Ukraine

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens to extinguish Ukraine as an independent state and to destabilize the European continent. While the full extent of Vladimir Putin's ambitions are not yet clear, his immediate aim is to depose the elected Ukrainian government and install a pro-Kremlin alternative in its place. His larger goal seems to be to reconstitute the Eastern core of the former Russian empire. With one Turkish ship already hit in the Black Sea and Russian artillery reportedly assembling on the Belarusian-Polish border, there is a significant risk that fighting could inadvertently or deliberately spill over into NATO territory. Already, the war has generated thousands of Ukrainian refugees. It is likely that in the coming days Russia will launch cyber-attacks on the critical infrastructure of the United States and its European allies. And it is possible that China could use the world's preoccupation with the situation in Ukraine to launch an assault on Taiwan, risking a general conflict that would have devastating consequences for the world.

Responsibility for the war in Ukraine rests with Putin alone. But the Biden Administration's actions have helped create the conditions for the crisis. After coming into office, it pursued high-level engagement with Putin while taking actions that cast reasonable doubt on U.S. support for Ukraine. President Biden slow-rolled notification of the military aid package to Ukraine and delayed meeting with President Zelensky to create space for engagement with Russia. He also cancelled the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council at the 2021 NATO Leaders Meeting, and President Biden appeared to cast shade on NATO's Open Door Policy in comments to the press. It is reasonable to assume that these actions helped to convince Putin that the timing was propitious for military action, in much the same way that Obama's 2009 Reset helped create the conditions for Putin's 2014 invasion of Crimea.

Now that Putin has played his hand, it is imperative that the United States move with alacrity and speed to stabilize the situation in Europe. We need to degrade Putin's ability to continue the war and provide serious aid to Ukraine, while seizing on the crisis as a perishable opportunity to stimulate greater European energy independence and seriousness about self-defense, with a view to a future Chinese move against Taiwan.

The United States should:

- **Provide more, and more serious, military aid to Ukraine.** The Ukrainian army has displayed remarkable courage and stamina in resisting the invasion and inflicting casualties on advancing Russian forces. But without immediate resupply its munitions will be depleted and it will almost inevitably be overrun. The Ukrainians also need a continuous flow of small arms ammunition, and artillery shells. They need anti-aircraft anti-tank missiles, counter-UAS rifles, loitering munitions, and mines. The United States should help the Ukrainian

national government establish a national redoubt in the western portion of the country, including by providing secure communications equipment and developing overland supply routes in the event of Russian air dominance. The model for this effort should be U.S. support for the Mujahadeen insurgency in the 1980s that significantly raised the costs of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We should work closely with Ukraine's NATO neighbors, especially Poland and Romania, to ensure we put in place a system that continues to function.

- **Apply consequential sanctions on Russia.** The Administration's initial two rounds, which included sanctions on Kremlin insiders, asset freezes on large banks, and export controls, were inadequate. Subsequent actions, including especially banning sanctioned banks from the SWIFT international payments system, have helped increase the pressure but may need to be expanded if Putin continues to escalate militarily. The Administration should:
 - Place sanctions on Vladimir Putin's personal assets, reported to be in excess of \$200 Billion.
 - Place sanctions on the activities of the Russian Central Bank. The Administration should coordinate with allies to enact a ban on the Central Bank's transactions in dollars, euros, pounds, and yen, or even freeze its assets in U.S. and allied jurisdictions.
 - Prepare for potential asset freezes on additional Russian financial institutions and the banning of those institutions from the SWIFT payments system if the conflict widens.
 - Prepare for the worst-case eventuality of sanctioning the Russian energy sector. Taking this step would cause energy price spikes that would negatively impact our economy and that of Western Europe, almost certainly leading to recession. The Administration could phase in energy-sector sanctions, as the United States did with Iran oil sanctions, requiring certification by the Energy Information Agency (EIA) that the impact on the U.S. economy would be tolerable. However painful recession may be, it is preferable to nuclear war. If and as the conflict escalates, Washington needs to keep this option on the table as a deterrent to Russian attacks on NATO territory.

While we have no short-term mitigation or replacement options for Russia's oil and gas exports, there are steps that the United States can take to improve resilience in international energy markets, including:

- Prevailing upon the Gulf States, Australia, and other producing nations to increase production and export where technically feasible.
- Increasing U.S. oil and natural gas production, including via approval of six pending LNG export authorizations currently held within the Department of Energy.
- Granting emergency authorization to the abandoned Keystone XL Pipeline, among others, and granting an extension of the offshore oil leasing permits in the Gulf of Mexico that are set to expire in June 2022.
- Working with Congress and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure that no undue burdens are levied upon new interstate pipeline environmental authorization procedures, including by taking urgent steps to define energy security

emergencies more clearly and guidelines for appropriate regulatory waivers in such emergencies.

While these steps at home and abroad will take time, even publicly announcing policy moves along these lines will have a salutary effect on allied confidence and international markets.

- **Provide excess U.S. military articles to frontline NATO members.** The United States should assess the inventory of weapons it is decommissioning for articles that could be provided on loan or purchase to frontline NATO member states. These include inter alia F-15, F-16 and A-10 aircraft. Also, the United States should consider offering an advance shipment to Poland of M1 tanks from its stock in Europe, against Warsaw's order of 250 M1A2s. Given the dramatically increasing demand for U.S. weapons, the Administration should take immediate steps to provide incentives for major defense manufacturers to increase production of the types of munitions that the United States and its allies are most likely to need in a conflict, including armor-piercing ammunition.
- **Urge Europe to continue stepping up.** The war in Ukraine is focusing the attention of European governments on the urgent need to do more for the security of the European continent. Germany's suspension of development of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and historic increase in defense budget demonstrate that the crisis presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to increase burden-sharing. But fully exploiting this opportunity will require active U.S. diplomacy. The Administration should:
 - In energy: The Biden Administration should urge Germany to reduce reliance on Russian gas by announcing that it will not shut down its three remaining nuclear reactors, restarting the nuclear reactors that it had mothballed under the Merkel government, reversing its decision to exit coal in the near term, and dropping Berlin's opposition to nuclear power projects in Poland. It should push the European Union (EU) to establish a target of reducing Russia's share of European gas imports to well below the current 40 percent. It should increase coordination with Germany and the EU to identify critical energy projects capable of increasing natural gas market liquidity and allocate available U.S. (International Development Finance Corporation), EU and German financing to ensure project development.
 - In defense: Building on Germany's announcement that it will meet and exceed its Wales Summit pledge of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, the Administration should launch a diplomatic offensive aimed at convincing NATO's remaining low spenders to do the same by the time of NATO's 2022 Madrid Summit. It should welcome Berlin's decision to provide lethal aid to Ukraine and encourage other European countries to follow suit. The Administration should advocate for formal NATO requirements that each ally commit to fielding specific, exercised military capabilities as part of NATO's operational planning. It should also shore up the legacy support and medical facilities infrastructure in Germany and encourage Turkey, in accordance with the Montreux Convention, to close the Bosphorus Strait to applicable Russian naval vessels.

- **Strengthen NATO's frontline.** As the FAL Defense Working Group has [pointed out](#), it is imperative that the United States keep the potential for a Chinese move against Taiwan in mind when evaluating available military assets for the European theater. At the same time, the United States already has significant forces within the European theater and should use these to maximum effect to demonstrate its resolve and capability for honoring Article 5. This is especially important in the present phase of the conflict, when public reports suggest that Putin is massing artillery on the Belarusian-Polish border. The United States should press NATO to relinquish the now defunct U.S.-NATO Founding Act and move to build permanent military installations in Poland and Romania, while enhancing its rotational presence in the Baltics. The Administration should rethink its unwillingness to support the 3Seas Initiative, with an eye to urgent infrastructure projects that enhance North-South military mobility along NATO's Eastern flank.
- **Cut diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation.** In light of the scale and human costs of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, the US should not maintain normal diplomatic intercourse with Moscow. It should close the Russian Embassy and Consulates and eject as large a number of Russian diplomatic personnel as practically feasible, paring links down to only the most urgent of communication channels. The bureaucratic temptation to do otherwise, by implementing a variety of carve-outs, will be great. But the severity of Putin's actions in Ukraine and the perniciousness of the threat he poses to us and our allies shows that no constructive diplomatic interaction can occur under the current circumstances.

In all of these areas, there is no time to waste. While Ukraine is putting up a brave fight, it cannot hold out indefinitely without meaningful help from the outside. The U.S. strategic aim should be to nurture a Ukrainian ulcer that bleeds Russia white and forces it to rethink its current foreign policy. To date, the Biden Administration's efforts have not been sufficient to the task. The United States and its allies need to move quickly to provide additional warfighting materiel while applying their maximum economic tools at their disposal to constrict the Russian energy sector and beefing up the NATO frontier. Failure to act decisively will speed Russia's advance and present NATO with even greater risks in the days ahead.

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